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Brief diary

of

Joseph Avella.

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Brief diary, when in the army, of Joseph Avella, Monson, Mass.

May, 3o, 1918. Reported at Ware, Mass for service. Was ordered to le
home June 3, for Fort Slocum.

June 3. Left Monson in R.P. Cushman's automobile for Ware. Left
at 9 A.M., arrived in Springfield 11.3o where we stopped for di
while waiting for another train. Left Springfield 12.3o, arrived
New Rochelle, N.Y. at 5 P.M., walked two miles to wharf where we
boarded boat to Fort Slocum, had supper when we arrived at Fort
cum, then waited for our district to be called which came at 4
Tuesday morning. During our wait had to lay on ground as comfor
as we could. Tuesday hung around doing nothing but wait. Wednesd
was examined and found physically fit. Thursday received clothi
Friday left for Camp Jackson in heavy rain. Rode from Fort Slocum to
Jersey City in boat. Boarded train at Jersey City for Camp Jack
where we arrived Sunday at 1 A.M.
Monday morning was assigned to Battery B. 1st. Battalion F.A.R.
and started drilling same day which lasted regular until July
when we left Camp Jackson for Overseas.
July 17, Arrived at Camp Merritt where we received some oversea
equipment and promised a 24 hour leave which never came, as on
following day we were ordered to pack our barrack bags which h
most of our equipment and carry them to freight cars about 1 l
miles away.
July 21, had breakfast 12.3o A.M. and left Camp Merritt with pa
on our back at 5 o'clock, after a seven mile hike arrived at Al
Landing where we boarded Ferry boat to New York Harbor where w
boarded our oversea ship The Harrisburg which left at 9 A.M Ju
22, 1918. Fair trip across the ocean spotted a few submarines b
they did no harm. Arrived at Liverpool England Aug. 2, 1918. Lande
morning of Aug. 3 and boarded train for Romsey, England and afte
riving there walked about two miles to Camp Wooley, where we st
in tents for three days. Left Camp Wooley Wednesday morning for
Southampton a twelve mile hike with packs on our back and very
"some hike" several boys had to be carried by trucks after the
out. At Southampton boarded boat to cross English Channel, boat
crowded no place to sleep except when we leaned against each o
Arrived at Le Havre, France at one A.M. but did not unload unti
en A.M. hiked five miles to another small camp where we remaine
overnight. Next day hiked back to Le Havre and boarded box cars
Camp Hunt (France) Very tiresome trip in these box cars.
Aug. 1o. Arrived at Camp Hunt where we received Rifle, Bayonet, a
Gas Mask drill for one week. Left Camp Hunt Aug. 2o, 1918 with f
in a very small box car which made it very uncomfortable unti
Aug. 26 when we arrived at Toul, France
One man was killed by train on this trip. From Toul we went to
La Tour where we remained until Aug. 29 when I was assigned to
Battery B. 115 F.A. at the front. That same night hiked about
miles and stopped in a wood which proved to be my first positi
at the front which was the St. Mihiel Front. While at this fr
I was stationed at this picket line, we had to get up at five t
each morning and lead horses to water which was about two mile
away, at night had to go out with details to haul ammunition to
gun positions. On second night we started to haul ammunition
Germans threw light on us and we had to lay on our stomachs fo
two hours so they could not see us. Some days or night we co
not get any sleep at all. Drew ammunition every night until
of September 12 when we worked from 12 noon until 9 A.M. next
morning without a mouthful to eat, when stopped to get two slic
bacon and slice of bread. After that kept on handling ammunit
until twelve o'clock when we were ordered to cease firing.
At that time every man was ready to rest but the ground was we
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Monday morning was assigned to Battery B. 1st. Battalion F.A.R.D. and started drilling same day which lasted regular until July 16 when we left Camp Jackson for Overseas.
July 17, Arrived at Camp Merritt where we received some overseas equipment and promised a 24 hour leave which never came, as on the following day we were ordered to pack our barrack bags which held most of our equipment and carry them to freight cars about 1 1/2 miles away.
July 21, had breakfast 12.3o A.M. and left Camp Merritt with packs on our back at 5 o'clock, after a seven mile hike arrived at Alpine Landing where we boarded Ferry boat to New York Harbor where we boarded our oversea ship The Harrisburg which left at 9 A.M July 22, 1918. Fair trip across the ocean spotted a few submarines but they did no harm. Arrived at Liverpool England Aug. 2, 1918. Landed morning of Aug. 3 and boarded train for Romsey, England and after arriving there walked about two miles to Camp Wooley, where we staid in tents for three days. Left Camp Wooley Wednesday morning for Southampton a twelve mile hike with packs on our back and very hot. "some hike" several boys had to be carried by trucks after they fell out. At Southampton boarded boat to cross English Channel, boat very crowded no place to sleep except when we leaned against each other. Arrived at Le Havre, France at one A.M. but did not unload until seven A.M. hiked five miles to another small camp where we remained overnight. Next day hiked back to Le Havre and boarded box cars for Camp Hunt (France) Very tiresome trip in these box cars.
Aug. 1o. Arrived at Camp Hunt where we received Rifle, Bayonet, and Gas Mask drill for one week. Left Camp Hunt Aug. 2o, 1918 with forty in a very small box car which made it very uncomfortable until Aug. 26 when we arrived at Toul, France
One man was killed by train on this trip. From Toul we went to Menil La Tour where we remained until Aug. 29 when I was assigned to Battery B. 115 F.A. at the front. That same night hiked about four miles and stopped in a wood which proved to be my first position at the front which was the St. Mihiel Front. While at this front I was stationed at this picket line, we had to get up at five thirty each morning and lead horses to water which was about two miles away, at night had to go out with details to haul ammunition to gun positions. On second night we started to haul ammunition Germans threw light on us and we had to lay on our stomachs for two hours so they could not see us. Some days or night we could not get any sleep at all. Drew ammunition every night until barrage of September 12 when we worked from 12 noon until 9 A.M. next morning without a mouthful to eat, when stopped to get two slices bacon and slice of bread. After that kept on handling ammunition until twelve o'clock when we were ordered to cease firing.
At that time every man was ready to rest but the ground was wet and we had no blankets with us so we could not rest at all, as it was

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also pretty cold and we had to keep moving all night to keep warm. Next morning started to move to another position,road was blocked so that we had to move very slowly,had corned beef and hard tack to eat on our way. Eleven P.M. reached our new position and laid down until five A.M. Had to pull guns in position by man power as it was too steep a hill for horses,we did this before breakfast. At this Front(St.Mihiel) we were attached to the 89th. Division. Next night the 89th. Division Artillery arrived so we were ordered to the Argonne Forest. While moving passed many German prisoners who were taken in battle,also met some French women who were rescued after being captured by the Germans. They were found in a building in Bernecourt.We hiked every night from dusk to daylight until Sept. 20 when we reached Camp Mallery and there had two good nights sleep on the floor of a barrack.

Sept.22 Left this camp in heavy rain,stopped in barn about two A.M. but we were soaked through,we laid in barn until 5.30 A.M. and got up and hiked the rest of the way to our first picket line at the Argonne Front. The first night there we hauled ammunition to our first gun position which lasted all night as usual. Next night had to move guns to new position.During the last hike we passed the town of Bernecourt,Eppecourt,Havacourt,Villas and many other towns of which we could not find the name,some were in ruins.

Carried ammunition to guns every night and also fired at intervals until Sept.26 when we laid our first barrage at the Argonne which lasted from one A.M. to eleven A.M. steady firing. That same night we had to move our guns to a position six miles ahead as our guns could not reach the enemy from this position as they were retreating fast. On this hike we crossed what is called Dead Man's Hill which was shelled so bad that horses with guns or wagons had to go around it,it being all holes .

Sept.28,starting firing from new position where we fired all the time some time ceasing for a few hours and always got an answer to our guns which landed pretty close several times. Fired at this place until Oct. 2 when we were ordered to move our guns ahead two miles,which we did that same night. We found our new position to be very dangerous.They fired back full as many shells as we sent them. At this position three men from my battery had to go to hospital with shrapnel wounds and fifteen men from gas.

Fired here all the time until Oct.6 when we move ahead two more miles.This position was full as bad as the last,three more men being wounded. Remained at this position three days when we were relieved by another Artillery and were told that we would go to a rest camp from there but after hiking until Oct 12 we were at the Metz flank of the St. Mihiel Salient front which proved far from being a rest Camp as it was also a hard front and kept us busy all the time.

I was orderly for a first Lieut. on this last hike and one week after but did not like it so asked to be put on gun squad which was granted. Remained at this position until November first when we moved our guns two miles ahead which brought us at the edge of a large plain across which we could see the German lines but made it a very dangerous position,many shells came as close as taking the camouflage off of our guns and scattering stones and mud all over.

Nov. 6 some boys discovered a vegetable garden below the hill and being short of rations we undertook to go after some,we pulled turnips and cabbage and started back up the hill when the enemy spied us and fired at us as fast as their guns would let them and many shells hit very close but we reached the top of the hill with no one hit and also hung on to our grub which tasted fine the next day for dinner.

November eighth I was taken sick,had fever to 1o2 but hung around as I did not want to leave the company,so I did not do any work But one night they sent a little gas and put ten men in the hospital and I being in the dugout sick swallowed just enough to take away my taste.I could taste nothing so on November 13 I left for the hospital,first went to Evac.Hospital No.13 at Commercy,France,after staying there on a diet of cocoa three times a day I was moved to B.H.No.78 at Toul,France where I remained under treatment until Dec. 28 and then was sent to Convalescent Hospital No.21o also in Toul. Remained there until January 8 and was sent to B.H.No.95 at Perigeaux.From there I moved to Evac. Hospital No.2o at Beau Desert where I remained until Feb. 2o when I boarded the S.S.Siboney for the U.S. Landed in U.S. March 4,went to Debarkation Hospital No.5 in New York City where I remained until March 14,1919 when I went to Camp Devens where I was discharged March 27,1919.

Signed,Joseph E.Avella